

# The MILLION DOLLAR MYSTERY

By Harold MacGrath

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"The Million Dollar Mystery" will run for twenty-two consecutive weeks in this paper. By an arrangement with the Thausen Film Company it has been made possible not only to read the story in this paper but also to see it each week in the various moving picture theatres. For the solution of this mystery story \$10,000 will be given.

**Conditions Governing the Contest.**  
The prize of \$10,000 will be won by the man, woman or child who writes the most acceptable solution of the mystery, from which the last two reels of the motion picture drama will be made and the last two chapters of the story written by Harold MacGrath.

Solutions may be sent to the Thausen Film Corporation, either at Chicago or New York, any time up to midnight, Dec. 14. They must bear postoffice marks not later than that date. This allows four weeks after the first appearance of the last film released and three weeks after the last film published in the paper in which to submit the solutions.

A board of three judges will determine which of the many solutions received is the most acceptable. The judgment of this board will be absolute and final. Nothing of a literary nature will be considered in the decision, nor given any preference in the selection of the winner of the \$10,000 prize. The last two reels, which will give the most acceptable solution to the mystery, will be presented in the theatres having this feature as soon as it is possible to produce the same. The story corresponding to these motion pictures will appear in the newspapers coincidentally, or as soon after the appearance of the pictures as practicable. With the last two reels will be shown the picture of the winner, his or her home, and other interesting features. It is understood that the newspapers, so far as practicable, in printing the last two chapters of the story by Harold MacGrath, will also show a picture of the successful contestant.

Solutions to the mystery must not be more than 100 words long. Here are some questions to be kept in mind in connection with the mystery as an aid to a solution:

- No. 1.—What becomes of the millionaire?
- No. 2.—What becomes of the \$1,000,000?
- No. 3.—Whom does Florence marry?
- No. 4.—What does become of the Russian countess?

### Synopsis of Previous Chapters.

Stanley Hargrave, millionaire, after a miraculous escape from the den of the gang of brilliant thieves known as the Black Hundred, lives the life of a recluse for eighteen years. Hargrave one night enters a Broadway restaurant and there comes face to face with the gang's leader, Braine.

After the meeting, during which neither man apparently recognizes the other, Hargrave hurries to his magnificent Riverdale home and lays plans for making his escape from the country. He writes a letter to the girls' school in New Jersey where 18 years before he had mysteriously left on the doorstep his baby daughter, Florence Gray. He also pays a visit to the hangar of a daredevil aviator.

Braine and members of his band surround Hargrave's home at night, but as they enter the house the watchers outside see a balloon leave the roof. The safe is found empty—the million which Hargrave was known to have drawn that day was gone. Then some one announced the balloon had been punctured and dropped into the sea.

Florence arrives from the girls' school, Princess Olga, Braine's companion, visits her and claims to be a relative. Two bogus detectives call, but their plot is foiled by Norton, a newspaper man.

By leaving the captain of the Orient Norton lures a train for Braine and his gang. Princess Olga also visits the Orient's captain and she easily falls into the reporter's snare. The plan proves abortive through Braine's good luck and only himself falls into the hands of the police.

Later, Florence is lured from home by the band, but succeeds in freeing herself from their clutches. The next day Jones removes a box from his hiding place and pursued by Braine's men rushes to the water front. A race in motor boats ensues, Jones drops the box into the sea and with his automatic sets fire to the pursuing boat.

Florence goes homeback riding and is captured by one of Braine's men along the roadside, Norton rescues her. They are pursued, however, and the pair make their complete escape only after Norton has exploded a life of the last approaching machine with a bullet.

After failing in their first attempt, the Black Hundred trap Florence. They ask her for money, but she escapes again telling them:

disguised as her father, succeeds in taking her back to sea with him. Florence sets fire to the boat and is rescued by a ship on which Norton has been shanghaied.

Norton and Florence, safely ashore and with no longer any misunderstanding between them, take the train for home. The train is wrecked and waiting members of the Black Hundred carry the injured Florence to a deserted hut. Norton, who tries to rescue her, is tied to the railroad tracks. Florence saves him and finally Jones comes to the rescue of both.

The Black Hundred recover the box Jones dropped in the ocean. By a clever ruse Norton and Jones regain it. (Copyright, 1914; By Harold MacGrath.)

### CHAPTER XIII. AN AGENT FROM RUSSIA.

The Black Hundred, not as individuals, but as an organization, began to worry. Powerful, and often reckless and daring because it was powerful, it began to look about for some basic cause for all these failures against Hargrave's ghost. They had tried to put the inquisitive reporter out of the way; they had laid every trap they could think of to catch the mysterious visitor at the Hargrave home; they had thrown out a hundred lures to bring Hargrave out of his lair, and failed; they had lost a dozen valuable men and several thousand dollars. This must end somewhere, and quickly.

The one ray of hope for the conspirators lay in the fact that Florence had never seen her father and knew not in the least what he looked like. They determined to try again in this direction.

"Give it all up," said the countess to Braine. "I tell you, whatever is back of all this is stronger than we are. He knows the organization, and for all we know he may be a ghost." "I never go back," smiled Braine. "There's something more than the million. There's the sport of the thing. We've been bested in a dozen bouts, and nearly always by a fluke. They have the breaks, as they say out at the Polo grounds."

"But the time and expense when we might be getting results elsewhere! I tell you, Leo, I'm afraid, it's the always hearing some one behind you and never finding anybody when you turn. I have told you my doubts. I have also asked you to trap that butler, but you've always laughed."

"You are seeing ghosts, Olga. A new man from holy Russia," shrugging, "is coming tonight. Evidently the head over there thinks our contributions of late have not been up to the mark, and they are going to stir us up. I am willing to wager my soul, however, that the box is simply a hoax to befuddle us. Either that or it holds the key. But the rest of them insist that the box must be recovered. When I leave this room tonight I am going over to Riverdale and stalk all by myself I'm going to get a glimpse of that mysterious stranger. He carries a scar of mine somewhere, for I hit him that night."

The door opened, and the executive chamber became silent.

"Count Paroff," boomed the voice of Vron. "He will present his credentials."

This formality was executed as prescribed by the rules; and Count Paroff was given his chair. He spoke for a while, rather pompously.

The head organization is not satisfied with its offspring in this Hargrave affair," he said in conclusion. "You are slow."

"The you have come with some suggestions for the betterment of our business?" asked Braine ironically.

"Sir, this is not the hour for flippancy," said the agent coldly.

Braine made a sign with his hand, a sign not observed by every one. Instantly Paroff bent lowly. He recognized that the speaker was the actual, not the nominal, head of the American branch.

"What are your suggestions?" inquired the nominal head from his chair systems to avoid a clash between the newcomer and the truculent master of them all.

"I have been informed that Hargrave's daughter has never seen her father, not even a photograph of him," said Paroff, more amiably.

"We are absolutely certain that this is the case," said the nominal head, who was known as the president. "But we tried one play in that direction, and it failed miserably."

"I have the story," replied Paroff. "It was clumsily done. The house was an old one."

Braine was frank enough to admit the truth of this statement, however much he disliked the admission. He nodded.

"I have authority to take a hand in this affair. We cannot waste all summer. Those government plans of the fortifications of the Panama are waiting. There's your millions. But that remains that it is the law of the Black Hundred never to step down till absolutely defeated. The hidden million is but half; we must find and break this renegade Hargrave."

"And so am I," thought the man with his ear to the little hole in the ceiling above. "And some day, my energetic friend, I'm going to pay you back for that bullet."

Count Paroff cleared his voice and laid his plans before his audience.

"To act frankly and in the open, to go boldly to the Hargrave home and proclaim myself Hargrave. I can disguise myself in a manner that will at least temporarily fool the butler."

"Who has been with his master for fourteen years, knows every move, habit, gesture, inflection," interposed Braine. "But proceed Count, proceed. You will remember the old adage: too many cooks."

"Ah," flashed back the count, "but a new cook?"

Olga touched Braine's arm warningly.

"You mean, then, that there has been talk in St. Petersburg of disposing of some one?"

"A good deal of talk, sir," haughtily, forgetting that he had bent humbly enough but a few moments gone.

"Very well; go on."

Thought the man at the peephole above. "There's another adage. When thieves fall out, then honest men get their dues. Yes, yes; proceed, proceed!"

Paroff went on. "I shall, then, go frankly to the Hargrave house and claim my own. Meantime I leave to you the business of luring the butler away. Half an hour is all I need to bring that child here, to break the wall that stands between us and what we seek."

"Is that so?" murmured Braine.

"Olga, I want you to play a trick on this handsome delegate at large. I'm not very enthusiastic over his talk. I want him humiliated. All you have to do, he says, is to walk into the Hargrave house and walk out again. Well, let's you and I see that he does that and nothing else. I'll have no one meddling with my own game."

Some one sneezed, and everybody looked at his neighbor. The sneeze was repeated, but muffled, as if some one was desperately anxious to avoid sneezing.

"It came from above," whispered Olga. "Don't look up!"

Braine was cool. He walked idly across the room to where Vron sat.

"Very well, Paroff; we give you free rein," to Vron he said: "Some one is watching us from the room overhead. I thought that room belonged to us."

"It does," said Vron stolidly.

"Then how is it that some one is watching from up there? No excitement, I'm going to bid every one good-night, then I'm going to investigate. When I leave you will quietly send men to all the exits to the building. I want the man who sneezed, and I want him hushed."

Olga departed with Braine, only she immediately sought the taxi that brought her and was driven home. It was always understood that when any serious exploit was under way hereabouts she was to make her departure at once.

Vron stationed his men at the several exits and Braine went upstairs. The man who had sneezed, however, had vanished as completely as if he had worn that invisible cloak one reads about in the Persian tales. As a matter of fact, after the second sneeze he had gone up to the roof, got out by the trap, and jumped—rather risky business, too—to the next roof and had chambered down the fire escape of the second building. He was swearing audibly. After all these days of care and planning, after all his cleverness in locating the rendezvous of the Black Hundred, and now to lose his advantage because of an uncontrollable sneeze! He would never dare go back, and just when he was beginning to pick up fine bits of information! So Florence Hargrave was going to have a new father in a day or so? There were some clever rogues among this band of theirs; but their cleverness was well offset by an equal number of fools.

"Yes, there were some clever rogues, and to prove this assertion Braine secured a taxicab and drove furiously away, his desire to see the cab, an ancient enemy, dropped the cab a block or two away and presently showed himself away in the summer house at the foot of the lawn. It would have been a capital idea—that is, if the other man had not thought of and anticipated this very thing. So he used a public pay station telephone; and Braine, waited in vain, waited till the lights in the Hargrave house went out one by one and it became wrapped in darkness within and moonshine without.

Braine was a philosopher. He returned to his waiting taxicab, drove home, paid the bill, smiling grimly, and went to bed. It was going to be a wonderful game of blind man's buff, and it was going to be sport to watch this fool Paroff blunder into a pit.

The next afternoon Florence and Norton sat in the summer house talking of the future. Lovers are prone to talk of that. As if anything else in the world ever equals the present. They talked of nice little apartments and vacations in the summer, and how much they would save out of his salary, and a thousand and one other things which would not interest you at all if I recounted them in detail. But they did love each other, and they were going to be married; you may be certain of that. They did not care a snap of the finger what Jones thought. They were going to be married, and that was all there was to it. Of course, Florence couldn't touch a penny of her father's money. If he, Norton, couldn't take care of her without help, why, he wouldn't be worth the powder to blow him up with.

"But, my dear, you must be very careful," he said. "Jones and I will always be about somewhere. If they really get hold of you once, God alone knows what will happen. It is not you, it is your poor father they want to bring out into the open. If they knew where he was they would not bother you in the least."

"Have I really a father? Sometimes I doubt. Why couldn't he steal into the house and see me, just once?"

"Perhaps he dares not. This day, is always watched night and day, though you'll look in vain to discover any one. Your father knows best what he is doing, my dear girl. You see, I met him years ago in China; and when he started out to do a certain thing he generally did it. He never botched any of his plans. So we all must wait. Only I'm going to marry you all the same, whether he likes it or not. The rogues will try to impose upon you again; but do not pay any attention to notes or persons in the papers. You've been through enough. And it was a lucky thing that I was on that freighter that picked you up at sea. I shall always wonder how that yacht took fire."

"So shall I," replied Florence, her brows drawing together in puzzlement. "Sometimes I think I must have done it. You know, people out of their heads do strange things. I seem to see myself as in a dream. And this man Braine is a scoundrel!"

"Yes; and more than that, he is the dear friend of the countess. But understand, you must never let her dream or suspect that you know. It is lulling her into overconfidence some day she will naturally grow careless, and then we'll have them all. I think I understand what your father's idea is; not to have them arrested for blackmail, but practically to exterminate them, put them in prison for such terms of years that they'll die there. When you see a snake, a poisonous one, don't let it get away. Kill it. Well, I must be off to work."

"And you be careful, too. You are in more danger than I am."

"But I'm a man and can dodge quick," he laughed, picking up his hat.

"What a horrid thing money is! I hadn't any money, nobody would bother me."

"I would," he smiled. He wanted to kiss her, but the eternal Jones might be watching from the windows; and so he patted her hand instead and walked down the graveled path to the street.

It was difficult work for Florence to play the friendship. She was like her father; she did not bestow it on every one. She had given her friendship to the Russian, the first real big friendship in her life, and she had been roughly disillusioned. But if the countess could act, so could she; and of the two her acting was the most consummate. She could smile and laugh and jest, all the while her heart was burning with wrath.

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One day, a week or so after her meeting with Norton in the summer house, Olga arrived, beautifully gowned, handsome as ever. There was not the least touch of the adventures in her makeup. Florence had just received some mail, and she had dropped the letters on the library table to greet the countess. She had opened them, but had not yet looked at their contents.

They were chatting pleasantly about inconsequent things, when the maid came in and asked Florence to come to Miss Susan's room for a moment. Florence excused herself, wondering what Susan could want. She forgot the mail.

As soon as she was gone the countess, certain that Jones was not lurking about, picked up the letters and calmly examined their contents; and among them she found this remarkable document: "Dear daughter, I have never seen; I must turn the treasure over to you. Meet me at 8 P. M. in the summer house. Tell no one as my life is in danger. Your loving father."

The countess could have laughed aloud. She saw this man Paroff's hand; and here was the chance to be fool and humiliate him and send him off picking to his cold and miserable country. She had made up once as Florence, and she could easily do so again. The only thing that troubled her was the fact that she did not know whether Florence had read the letter or not. Thus, she did not dare destroy it. She first thought of changing the lock; then she concluded to drop the letter exactly where she had found it and trust to luck.

When Florence returned she explained that her absence had been due to some trifling household affair.

Said the Russian: "I come primarily to ask you to tea tomorrow, where they dance. If you like, you may ask Mr. Norton to go, though I begin to observe that you two are rather fond of one another."

"O. Mr. Norton is just a valuable friend," returned Florence with a smile that quite deceived the other woman. "I shall be glad to go to the tea. But I shall not promise to dance."

"Not with Mr. Norton? Really, the rogues never dance themselves. They make others dance instead."

"I shall have to tell that," declared the countess; and she laughed quite heartily.

"Then I have said something witty?"

"Indeed you have; and it is not only witty but truthful. I'm afraid I've never said that the rest of us have any idea of."

"Perhaps I am," thought Florence; "at least, deeper than you believe."

When the countess fluttered down to her limousine, Florence laid the sight of it and drove away Florence remembered her letters. And when she came to the one purporting to be from

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ioned and fogged; not for what unnecessary righteousness he suffered at the hands of Paroff he would presently pay. He took her straight to the executive chamber of the Black Hundred, and pushed her into the room, exclaiming triumphantly:

"Here is Hargrave's daughter!"

"Indeed!" said Olga, throwing back her veil and standing revealed in her mask.

"Olga!" cried Braine laughing. "And that was the inluous end of the secret agent from Russia!"

(TO BE CONTINUED)

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